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ABSTRACT

Subjects were 44 males and 44 females. They were presented with a photograph showing a female with either an attractive or an unattractive male and with background information concerning the status of the male, (medical student or sales clerk). After receiving the information, subjects evaluated the female. Results revealed strong effects for attractiveness. The female was seen as significantly more intelligent, self-confident, friendly, talented, likable, and exciting when associated with an attractive as opposed to an unattractive male partner. In contrast to the Meiners and Sheposh study (1976), sex of the respondent was an important variable. For five of the nine dimensions the female respondents rated the female target person significantly more positively when she was associated with an attractive partner than when she was associated with an unattractive partner, whereas male evaluations of the target female were not affected by the attractiveness of her male partner. Consistent with the Meiners and Sheposh study, status affected a smaller number of attributes. (Author)

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The Radiating Effects of Status and Attractiveness of a Male Upon Evaluations of His Female Partner

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Abstract. Forty-four male and 44 female subjects were presented with a photograph showing a female with either an attractive or an unattractive male and with background information concerning the status of the male, (medical student or sales clerk). After receiving the information, subjects evaluated the female. Results revealed strong effects for attractiveness. The female was seen as significantly more intelligent, self-confident, friendly, talented, likable, and exciting when associated with an attractive as opposed to an unattractive male partner. In contrast to the Meiners and Sheposh study (1976), sex of the respondent was an important variable. For five of the nine dimensions the female respondents rated the female target person significantly more positively when she was associated with an attractive partner than when she was associated with an unattractive partner, whereas males evaluations of the target female were not affected by the attractiveness of her male partner. Consistent with the Meiners and Sheposh study, status affected a smaller number of attributes.

An individual's attractiveness has wide-ranging effects upon the evaluations and behavior of others. Sigall and Landy (1973) found that benefits accrue not only to people who are physically attractive, but also to those associated with the physically attractive. In an extension of Sigall and Landy's study, Meiners and Sheposh (1976) investigated how the evaluation of a male might be affected by two quite different characteristics of his partner, beauty and intelligence. Intelligence was defined in terms of occupational status. In their study, subjects evaluated a male after seeing a videotape of him with his girlfriend. The results revealed that the male was evaluated more favorably by both male and female subjects when his partner was more attractive or more intelligent. Univariate analysis revealed that attractiveness of the female affected all ten dependent measures whereas intelligence affected a more select group of attributes.

It was concluded from these results that since beauty, in contrast to intelligence, is a highly visible, concrete attribute, it is valuable in many situations, and therefore wide-ranging conclusions can be drawn about the person who can attract a beautiful partner. It would seem that intelligence, since it is more elusive, abstract and internal, does not have the same impact as beauty and therefore would have more limited effects. The implication from these findings appears to be that intelligence and attractiveness have special and different places in the interpersonal marketplace. If, as Blau (1968) suggests, males and females possess different commodities for exchange, an investigation of the radiating effects of a male partner would be of interest.

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Specifically, the present study examined how the evaluation of a female might be affected by the attractiveness and status of her male partner. Our aim, as in the Meiners and Sheposh study, was to contrast the radiating effects of a surface quality, attractiveness, to one which is normally less visible, status.

In this study, forty-four male and 44 female subjects were asked to form impressions of a female from an 8 x 10 photograph. The female was shown with either an attractive or an unattractive male whose status was either high, a medical student, or low, a sales clerk. The two levels of status were determined by having 30 pre-test subjects rate the status and prestige of 15 occupations considered appropriate for a college-aged male. The occupation receiving the lowest mean rating was sales clerk and medical student received the highest rating.

For the attractive condition, a naturally attractive male was used. For the unattractive condition, the same male was used, but his appearance was altered with the use of nose putty, hair-dressing and makeup. In order to determine if the two levels of attractiveness of the male had been successfully manipulated, and also to determine if the female was of average attractiveness, the photographs were masked to allow only one of the couple to be visible. Ninety subjects, divided equally between males and females rated one of the pair on an 11-point scale anchored by Physically Unattractive (1) and Physically Attractive (11). The mean rating for the female was 6.57, the mean rating for the attractive male was 9.30 and for the unattractive male was 3.15. The results from an analysis of variance indicated a significant difference between the attractive and the unattractive male. There were no significant differences between male and female raters. It was thus determined that the female target person was of average attractiveness and that the attractiveness of the male had been successfully manipulated.

Subjects were presented with a photograph of a couple. The female was of average attractiveness. Subjects were told that her partner in the picture was her fiance. Her male partner was attractive or unattractive and his status was either that of a medical student or a sales clerk.

After viewing a photograph, each subject evaluated the female on nine dimensions taken from Sigall and Landy's study. These dimensions are listed in Table 1. Subjects evaluated the female by circling an appropriate number

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Insert Table 1 about here

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on a nine point scale. The design was a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial combining attractiveness of the female's partner, status of the female's partner and sex of the subject.

The first results to be considered are shown in Table 1. This table presents the F values for the main effects and interactions derived from each of the analyses of variance performed on the nine descriptive adjectives used by the subjects in evaluating the female. As can be seen,

a significant main effect for attractiveness was obtained for six of the dimensions. In all cases, the subjects evaluated the female more favorably when she appeared with the attractive male partner. For five of these dimensions, the attractiveness main effect was qualified by an attractiveness by six of subject interaction. The pattern of the interactions was similar for these five dependent measures. The means for these interactions are presented in Table 2. As can be seen, the male subjects evaluated the

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Insert Table 2 about here

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female target person relatively the same as to the degree to which she was friendly, likable, exciting, energetic, and self-confident. In contrast, female subjects' ratings on the same five dimensions differed as a function of the attractiveness of the male companion. Female subjects regarded the target female as possessing these characteristics to a significantly greater degree when she, the target female, was associated with an attractive male.

Turning back to Table 1 one can see that a main effect for status was obtained for two of the descriptive adjectives. The target female associated with the high status male was seen as more intelligent and more talented by both male and female subjects. Finally, there was one more area where males and females differed in their response patterns.

The analysis of variance performed on subjects' overall impressions of the target female yielded a significant status by six of subject interaction. The pattern of the interaction is shown in Table 3. Female subjects' overall

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Insert Table 3 about here

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impressions of the target female were more favorable when she was associated with the high status male. Surprisingly, the males' overall impression of the target female were more favorable when she was associated with the low status male. It may be that males are more receptive toward the female associated with the low-status male because she appears less threatening. A female who is associated with a sales clerk would be perceived as expecting less from a male than would one associated with a medical student, and therefore, the female associated with the sales clerk is seen more favorably the the males.

These results have demonstrated that attractiveness and status are valued commodities, and that a female is usually viewed more favorably when her partner possesses these qualities. The obtained results are similar to the Meiners and Sheposh study in that attractiveness of the partner had a significant impact on a large number of trait descriptions than did status. However, the results of this study depart from those of Meiners and Sheposh in that male and female subjects differed in their responses to a sizable number of the descriptive adjectives.

If the trait descriptions for which significant attractiveness by six of subject interactions were obtained, are viewed as a composite, a definite impression emerges. The cluster of traits that includes friendly, likable, exciting, energetic and self-confident, but interestingly not physically attractive, depicts a person who is out-going and sure of herself interpersonal situations. The fact that female respondents saw the target male as possessing these qualities to a greater degree when she was associated with the attractive, as compared to the unattractive male, suggests that females see these as important qualities if a female of average attractiveness is to secure an attractive male partner. Males on the other hand, seemingly do not link the male's attractiveness to these attributes in the female target person.

Based on the pattern of results, it would seem that females consider physical attractiveness an important attribute in the male, whereas males apparently do not. It may be that males are operating according to the cultural stereotype which holds that attractiveness is an important commodity for social exchange, for women but not for men.

In comparing the findings of the present study with those in which the radiating effects of a female were investigated, it would appear that the radiating effects of a male partner are more complex. Further work should address the processes that may underlie these complexities.

References

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Table 1

F Values for the Nine Descriptive Adjectives

	Attractiveness of Target's Partner	Status of Target's Partner	Sex of Subject	Attractiveness by Status	Attractiveness by Sex of Subject	Status by Sex of Subject
Friendly	4.43[a]*	<1	<1	1.98	5.07*	<1
Likable	11.32**	1.70	1.70	<1	7.88**	1.28
Exciting	6.35*	<1	7.14*	1.17	6.40*	2.46
Energetic	3.13	<1	<1	<1	4.14*	<1
Self-Confident	22.00***	1.29	<1	2.45	5.19*	<1
Attractive	<1	<1	2.38	3,48	<1	<1
Intelligent	11.95**	5.89*	<1	<1	1.57	<1
Talented	8.27**	4.87*	<1	<1	<1	<1
Overall	3.63	<1	<1	2.21	3.64	4.19*

[a] All F ratios are based on 1 and 81 degrees of freedom

* p .05

** p .01

*** p .001

Table 2

Attractiveness of Male by Sex of Subject Interactions
for Five Descriptive Adjectives

Friendly

	Attractive	Unattractive
Male	4.68[a]	4.73
Female	5.09	3.68

Likable

	Attractive	Unattractive
Male	5.41	5.27
Female	5.77	4.27

Exciting

	Attractive	Unattractive
Male	3.96	3.86
Female	4.60	3.00

Energetic

	Attractive	Unattractive
Male	4.36	4.45
Female	5.18	3.86

Self-Confident

	Attractive	Unattractive
Male	6.00	5.23
Female	6.95	4.72

Table 3

Status of Male by Sex of Subject Interaction

Overall Impression of the Target Female

	High Status Male	Low Status Male
Male	4.31	5.04
Female	5.18	4.58

[a] The higher the score the more positive the evaluation